

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

REPORT FOR PORTFOLIO HOLDER DELEGATED DECISION

by

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&

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**REPORT TITLE: Transforming Education Programme – Machynlleth
Library and Ysgol Bro Hyddgen New Building
Development**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

1.1 This report outlines the findings of a 28-day engagement relating to the possibility of relocating Machynlleth Library to the new school building at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, planned to open in 2026.

Appendix A: Engagement Report

2 Background

2.1 On the 11th October 2022, Cabinet approved a new Strategic Outline Case/Outline Business Case for capital investment to build a new 540-place all-age school at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, Machynlleth. The school currently operates over two sites with primary and secondary teaching taking place at separate ends of the town. The intention is to build the new school on the site of the secondary campus.

2.2 The new school building will incorporate early years facilities, areas for primary, secondary, post-16 education, a community room, an additional learning needs centre and wellbeing areas as well as external areas and a 3G pitch.

2.3 Cabinet was also keen to understand the views of the local community about the possibility of including the town library within the new school as well. If the library relocated to the school, this could provide a capital receipt in the region of £120,000. A condition assessment of the library in 2020 indicated that there were also maintenance costs of approximately £55,000.

2.4 The Council held a 28 day public engagement exercise which took place between the 1st February 2023 and the 28th February 2023.

2.5 Information about the engagement was shared with a wide range of stakeholders, and the engagement questionnaire was available on the Council's website throughout the engagement period. The engagement exercise was also publicised in the local press and on the Council's social media platforms. There were paper copies available at Machynlleth library and a return post box for the paper copies at the library.

2.6 Meetings with representatives of the Council's Library Services, Ysgol Bro Hyddgen,, Machynlleth Town Council and local members took place prior to the engagement period to ensure that they were aware of the exercise.

2.7 The Engagement Report can be found at Appendix A, but the following is a summary of the main findings:

- A total of 200 questionnaires were received, both online and in paper form.
- 89% of respondents were current library members
- 87.6% of the respondents identified as a resident living in the Machynlleth area
- In relation to the direct question: *To what extent do you agree that the Council should move Machynlleth library from its current location to the new Ysgol Bro Hyddgen Building?* A combined 89.5% answered Strongly Disagree and Disagree (see table below)

| Response | Number | % |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Strongly Agree | 7 | 3.5 |
| Agree | 4 | 2.0 |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 10 | 5.0 |
| Disagree | 71 | 35.5 |
| Strongly Disagree | 108 | 54.0 |
| Total responses | 200 | 100.0% |

- The main concerns were that the current library is in the most convenient location being in the town centre and accessible. Concerns were raised about the distance from the town centre to the school.
- When asked if anything would prevent people from using the library at its suggested location; 176 people responded and cited distance from town/location 81 times as the main barrier/prevention.

3. Advice

3.1 It is advised that the school project continues without the inclusion of the town library – this will enable the project to move on to the procurement stage with a clear scope and critical path.

3.2 However, given the significant financial pressures facing the Council, it is also advised that further consideration is given to the provision of the most cost-effective library service within the town of Machynlleth.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 Maintaining the library in its current location has resource implications. There are an estimated £55,000 of backlog maintenance required to the currently library building. The running costs of the current building are currently £12,000 p.a, - this doesn't include staffing costs. By locating the library within the new school it would be net zero carbon in operation which would be not be possible in the current location without significant investment.
- 4.2 Retaining the library in its current location foregoes a potential capital receipt of £120,000 which could be used to replace borrowing in the capital programme saving approximately £6,000 per year over 50 years.
- 4.3 The project is still at an early stage and the additional cost for fitting out the library within the new school is estimated at £50,000. There would also be an impact on the current design which would also lead to additional costs around re-designing. It should be noted that Welsh Government would contribute 65% of these costs as part of the school project, leaving the council with only 35% of these costs. Any works required to the currently library would need to be funded in their entirety by the council.
- 4.4 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report.

5 Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: the recommendations can be accepted from a legal point of view
- 5.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: " I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

6. Comment from local member(s)

- 6.1 Cllr Michael Williams: "I totally agree with the library not going to the proposed new school. However, please carry out repairs as required. The county council is in the position it is because very little has been invested in the building since its construction".

Cllr Elwyn Vaughan: I agree with the recommendation within the report and reflects the general opinion within the local community

7. Integrated Impact Assessment

N/A

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is advised that the school project continues without the inclusion of the town library – this will enable the project to move on to the procurement stage with a clear scope and critical path.

8.2 However, given the significant financial pressures facing the Council, it is also advised that further consideration is given to the provision of the most cost-effective library service within the town of Machynlleth.

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